

BRIEFING FOR PRESIDENT KENNEDY ON BERLIN

After the wall went up on August 13, 1961, the US and its allies intensified their planning regarding Berlin. During the summer of 1962, General Maxwell Taylor suggested that President Kennedy should have a briefing on this planning. Since I had prepared such a briefing for presentation to the Berlin Task Force, it was decided that I should give the briefing.

Although my briefing had attracted little interest before, news that it was to be presented to the President produced a number of telephone calls and visitors. After absorbing the comments which I received, I presented the briefing to the staff at the White House, including Mc George Bundy and General Taylor. General Taylor settled the matter by saying that he thought the briefing should be given to the President.

The next step was to give the briefing to Secretary of State Rusk. It is this version which I have obtained recently under the Freedom of Information Act, with some excisions. As I recall, I made several minor revisions as a result of Secretary Rusk's comments, but this is essentially the briefing which I gave to President Kennedy.

Present at the briefing, in addition to the President, were a number of senior officials, including Secretary Rusk, Secretary of Defense Mc Namara, Paul Nitze, General Taylor, and Mc George Bundy. I do not know the date of the briefing, but it would have been in August, 1962. Other than some comments by the President regarding nuclear weapons, the briefing was received in silence.

Shortly after this briefing, I accompanied Paul Nitze to Paris, where he presented the briefing to the NATO ambassadors. On the insistence of the French, however, the part about nuclear weapons was omitted. It is important to understand that what was under discussion here was not so much Berlin planning as US and NATO strategy.

Not long after we returned from Paris, the Berlin crisis took an unexpected turn, when it was found that Khrushchev had decided to install some missiles in Cuba.

John C. Ausland
Oslo, May 26, 1991

NOTE: The document I received from the State Department was a copy of a carbon copy. It is, therefore, not easy to read. I have, therefore, retyped it, noting where words were unclear and where there were excisions. From the context, the latter seem to concern covert operations and nuclear planning. The briefing was originally classified Top Secret.

August 2, 1962

BTF - Mr. Hillenbrand
BTF - J.C. Ausland
Briefing for President on Berlin

I attach a revised draft briefing for the President on Berlin, which takes into account the various comments I have received. Subject to any changes you would like made, I propose to use it for the preliminary presentation for the Secretary tomorrow. I will then further revise the script, in the light of his comments.

cc: White House - Mr. Klein
JCS - Col. Spragins
ISA - Capt. Cotton
White House - Col. Legere

BERLIN CONTINGENCY PLANNING

During the past year, the United States and its allies have devoted considerable time and effort to contingency planning for Berlin. The Berlin Task Force has prepared an inventory of this planning, with the view to determining what has been accomplished and what remains to be done.

This briefing is designed to review the results of this inventory. In doing this, we shall use the four phase framework set forth in NSAM 109 (or Poodle Blanket).

I shall begin by reviewing in general terms the four phases. I shall then examine each of the phases in more detail. This examination will describe military, economic, and covert actions which might occur in each phase. The description will include an account of Allied planning, the extent of Allied agreement, and the degree to which governments are committed in advance to a given course of action.

Following the review of the four phases, I should like to examine briefly the Allied organizational arrangements for Berlin planning and operations.

Finally, I shall review briefly some of the major gaps which remain in our planning.

FOUR PHASES

SLIDE 1

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| Phase I | Soviet/GDR interference with access. |
| Phase II | Significant blockage of access. Diplomatic activity. Non-combatant. NATO Military buildup. Economic and naval countermeasures. |
| Phase III. | Non-nuclear ground and/or action to restore access, supplemented by naval measures. |
| Phase IV. | Nuclear weapons. |

FOUR PHASES

National Security Action Memorandum 109 divides a developing Berlin crisis into four possible phases:

Phase I. During which Soviet/GDR interference with access is short of significant blockage of access to Berlin.

Phase II. After there is a significant blockage of access, such as a blockage of civilian ground access to Berlin. This non-combatant phase would be characterized primarily by intense diplomatic activity, a NATO military mobilization, and economic and naval countermeasures.

Phase III. During which substantial blockage of access continues. The dominant event in this phase would be the use of force, which could include non-nuclear ground and/or air action in East Germany and/or in Eastern Europe. This could be supplemented by world-wide naval measures. The purpose would be to induce the Soviets to restore access.

Phase IV. Would take place only after non-nuclear action had failed to restore access. The dominant event in this phase would be the use of nuclear weapons.

I should like to emphasize at this point that this is a

conceptual framework, which indicates the order in which we would prefer events to occur. It is not an attempt to predict how history will unroll. I might also mention that we have no idea of rushing from one phase to another. Our aim rather would be to stabilize the situation as early in the scenario as possible and work out an acceptable arrangement on Berlin with the Soviets.

The four phases have now been examined quadripartitely in some detail. I believe it is safe to say that there is considerable agreement on them. The differences regarding some of the details will emerge in the course of the briefing.

I should now like to examine the four phases in more detail.

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PHASE I

During Phase I. Allied vital interests remain substantially intact but are actively challenged by the Soviets and/or the GDR. I should say that we are at present in this phase. We will remain in it until some means of access to Berlin is interrupted or until an agreement of some sort on Berlin is reached.

The US goal during this phase is to maintain its vital interests and to seek an agreement on Berlin with the Soviet Union.

The bulk of Allied planning has been devoted to this stage. There is general agreement on measures to be taken in this stage, particularly with regard to preservation of ground and air access to Berlin. The major exception is related to naval countermeasures. We, France, and Germany believe that it might be suitable to use naval measures not involving use of force to supplement direct responses to Soviet/GDR harassment of access. The UK, although agreeing to plan quadripartite naval measures, does not believe they should be used before Phase II.

Now I should like to describe the events which might occur in Phase I in more detail.

Phase I

SLIDE 2

1. Diplomatic. - Discussion at Foreign Ministers and Ambassadorial level. Ad hoc action on specific problems.
2. Military. - LIVE OAK. Air Access - JACK PINE. Ground Access - FREE STYLE. Naval measures.
3. Economic. - TTD restrictions (now in effect). Limited selective embargo. Travel restrictions against bloc.
4. Covert. - Preparation.

1. Diplomatic action. This current phase - as Phase II - is dominated by diplomatic activity. Although a summit conference is not excluded, the effort to reach agreement is pursued primarily at the Foreign Minister and Ambassadorial level. As specific problems arise, a resolution is pursued at the appropriate level. This might be the Commandant in Berlin (as in the case of sector border incidents) or the Foreign

Ministers in Geneva (as in the case of the air corridors in March.)

2. Military action. In 1959, the US, UK, and France set up tripartite staff in Paris known as LIVE OAK, under the command of CINCEUR. Within the framework of LIVE OAK plans, the Allies have made military preparations to deal with possible interference with Allied access to Berlin.

Considerable tripartite planning has been done to preserve air access to Berlin, for the most part within the framework of the JACK PINE plans. This planning includes provision for dealing with Soviet/GDR efforts to threaten or interfere with civil flights. In event civil flights cease, there is provision to continue flying civil aircraft with military crews. Should the Soviets damage, shoot down, or force down and destroy an aircraft, there is provision for the use of fighter protection. There is also provision for flights over 10,000 feet in certain circumstances. Within the framework of the JACK PINE plans, the US and UK governments -- but not the French -- have delegated certain authority to General Norstad.

There has also been planning to deal with interference with ground access. Since the end of the blockade in 1949, both German and Allied access have been subjected to intermittent but frequent harassment. Methods of dealing with minor harassment have been developed informally. They are characterized by patient resistance and negotiation of each incident until the incident is resolved.

Recent formal planning concerns more serious forms of harassment, bordering on blockage. LIVE OAK has submitted to governments proposals for rules of conduct for Allied convoys in event they encounter unacceptable harassment. The US has approved these proposals (unclear word) for US convoys, pending Allied agreement, which we expect to reach in the near future. These rules of conduct and the delegation of authority under the JACK PINE air access plan constitute the extent of advance commitment by the US government regarding precisely what we will do in various contingencies on Berlin.

If Allied autobahn access appears to be blocked, LIVE OAK plans provide several alternative tripartite military probes, known as FREE STYLE. These range from a few vehicles to platoon size. Governments have, however, not delegated advance authority to employ any of these probes.

Planning has been done to deal with German access, largely through application of countermeasures.

The US has suggested -- and the French and Germans have agreed -- that the Allies might use naval measures not involving the use of force to counter serious interference with access. The British have, however, thus far resisted the concept of using naval measures prior to Phase II.

2. Economic. The nearly complete ban on issuance of Temporary Travel Documents to GDR residents, put into effect in September, 1961, continues. Although there would be advantages to further relaxing ban so as to be able to use it again, on balance we have thought it best not to lift it, in order to bring pressure to bear on the GDR to relax restrictions on travel to East Berlin. Quadripartite agreement has been reached on mildly restricting bloc travel to the West if access to East Berlin is denied the Allies. Tentative agreement has been reached with the Germans and French to take selective economic countermeasures, if persistent harassment of access to West Berlin occurs. The British reserve their decision until the event. NATO has also

agreed in principle to cut off air traffic to and from the bloc if a serious incident of physical interference with an Allied airliner occurs in the corridors.

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It is not possible to predict how long Phase I will last. By definition, it will end when it becomes clear that the Soviets/GDR are prepared to use force to maintain a significant blockage of access to Berlin or until a viable agreement is reached on Berlin. The Soviets have given every indication thus far of preferring to minimize their risks and avoid a step which seriously challenges Allied vital interests. There is no guarantee, however, that this will continue.

There have been indications recently that the Soviets may be planning to sign their long-heralded treaty with the GDR. If they do, the scenario would be significantly altered. I should like, therefore, to examine this contingency briefly.

Allied planning for a peace treaty, which is now once again under review, has been based on two assumptions. First, that while we should seek to discourage the Soviets from signing a treaty, in the last analysis we probably cannot prevent this step without resort to force and, second, that we are prepared to acquiesce in Soviet withdrawal from the checkpoints and accept under protest GDR processing of Allied traffic under the currently established procedures.

These assumptions set the limits for Allied reaction to any Soviet move to sign a peace treaty. Prior to any peace conference called by the Soviets, we would propose to take actions designed to deter the Soviet from concluding a treaty, especially one which would infringe our vital interest. At the same time, we would not want to engage our prestige too heavily on the signature of the treaty itself. Our actions after the treaty would depend on our estimate of the possible effect of the implementation of its provisions. They would be directed toward deterring the Soviet/GDR from taking steps which could lead to infringement of our vital interests with respect to Berlin.

If the Soviets decide to conclude a treaty, we would expect the process to stretch over a matter of months, rather than days. We would also expect the Soviets to proceed cautiously, in order to evaluate Allied reactions and thus minimize their risks.

A peace treaty would undoubtedly precipitate a crisis atmosphere. Nevertheless, given careful handling and determination, it should prove manageable. It is, however, always possible that -- either intentionally or through miscalculation -- Soviet/GDR action will result in infringement on our vital interests, such as a significant blockage of access to Berlin.

In this case, we would find ourselves in Phase II.

PHASE II

Phase II would provide our last chance to resolve the Berlin problem without the use of force. The prestige of both sides would be heavily engaged, and tensions would be running high. There would be strong pressures from all sides to make concessions to the Soviets, in order to avoid the risk of war.

The Allied goal during Phase II would be to employ non-combatant measures to restore their vital interests.

The Soviets on the other hand would probably aim at

negotiations without access restored, on the assumption that this situation would exert maximum pressure on the Allies to make concessions.

It has become evident in our quadripartite discussions that the US, UK, France, and Germany are in general agreement as to the preferred configuration of Phase II. Particularly as we have examined the alternatives available in Phase III and IV, it has been agreed in principle that we should be prepared to use all measures short of force to reach a settlement in Phase II.

PHASE II

SLIDE 3

1. Diplomatic. Security Council. Warnings to Soviets and satellites. Avoid formal conference without access.
2. Military. NATO build-up. Air access - JACK PINE. Ground access - airlift and stockpile. Naval measures.
3. Economic. Countermeasures depend on extent of blockade.
4. Covert. Passive resistance.

1. Diplomatic action. During this phase, diplomatic activity would continue to dominate events. At an early point, we would probably find ourselves in the Security Council if not on our initiative on another country's. Plans have been prepared, for example to go to the Security Council as soon as Soviet activity in the air corridors requires the introduction of fighters.

We would at this point probably want to make unpublicized warnings to the Soviets, as well as the satellites.

We would, however, probably want to avoid a formal conference until the Soviets indicate a willingness to restore access.

This diplomatic activity would be conducted against a background of mounting pressure.

2. Military Action. To make clear to the Soviets our determination and prepare for the possible failure of our combination of diplomatic and non-combatant pressures, there is a quadripartite agreement in principle that NATO should engage in a further military build-up or mobilization.

If Allied ground access were affected, plans exist for a garrison airlift to carry the necessary passengers and freight. If civilian ground access were blocked, it would become necessary to resort to the Berlin stockpile and implement QBAL - The Quadripartite Berlin Air Lift.

The quadripartite powers are also examining the possibility of the allies taking civilian motor traffic at some point under their aegis. This would involve giving civilian motor traffic the outward character of Allied military traffic. If such an attempt were resisted by the Soviets, as seems likely, the Soviets would have directly engaged the Allies on the ground and contingency planning for a blockage of Allied access would be applicable.

If the interruption of Phase I were related to air access, the Soviet challenge would have been met within the framework of JACK PINE plans. These actions - such as the Military Sponsored Air Service - could carry over into Phase II.

Quadrupartite agreement has also been reached that naval measures not involving the use of force might be used at this time to bring pressure on the Soviets.

3. Economic action. There is also quadrupartite agreement that another form of pressure that we could bring to bear on the Soviets would be economic countermeasures. These fall into three rough categories: severing and limiting exchanges with the bloc in other than trade fields; restrictions on transport and movement of persons; and selective or full trade embargo (including interzonal trade). The NAC has extensively examined these measures, and there is substantial agreement on the manner of their execution.

(PARAGRAPH EXCISED)

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The question is sometimes asked: how long will Phase II last? This is a bit hard to predict with any certainty. Since, however, unless the blockage were ended, it would last until either we or the Soviets resorted to force to resolve the impasse, we could hope that it would be a matter of months rather than days. We and our Allies would want to explore every avenue for peaceful settlement. We would also want to give the pressures we can bring to bear on the Soviets a chance to take effect. Time will also be required for our mobilization to place us in a position to use force if necessary with acceptable risk.

It should be kept in mind, however, that the length of Phase II will be conditioned by the fact Allied prestige will be heavily engaged in restoration of our vital interests.

PHASES III and IV

If, despite the actions taken in Phase II, Allied rights are not restored -- and there is a serious deterioration of the Berlin situation -- the US believes that the tripartite Allies should take appropriate action to clarify whether the Soviets/GDR intend to maintain blockage of ground and/or air access, while at the same time making clear allied intention to obtain re-opened access.

1. Military. If it were clear the Soviet/GDR intend to maintain blockage of access, the US believes that NATO should initiate military actions designed to induce the Soviets to re-open access.

This phase -- Phase III -- would mark the commencement of offensive non-nuclear combat, after positive verification of deliberate Soviet/GDR blockage of access to Berlin. It would be implemented by means of a plan, or plans, drawn from LIVE OAK (SEVERAL WORDS EXCISED) developed for the purpose. It is the view that Phase III would start under tripartite control and that the shift to NATO would take place at the time a tripartite operation came under attack by Soviet/GDR forces.

PHASE III

SLIDE 4

Ground - LIVE OAK (Trade Wind and June Ball)
(SEVERAL WORDS EXCISED)

Air - LIVE OAK (Jack Pine)

(SEVERAL WORDS EXCISED)

PHASE IV

Demonstrative (SEVERAL WORDS EXCISED)

Selective

General war

Plans available and suitable for implementation of Phase III include:

1. On the ground - Trade Wind and June Ball, both LIVE OAK plans, and (MOST OF LINE EXCISED)
2. In the air, Live Oak Jack Pine III, and (SEVERAL LINES EXCISED)
3. At sea - quadripartite maritime countermeasures (SEVERAL WORDS EXCISED).

Phase IV, beginning, in the US view, with the first use of nuclear weapons in any form, follows Phase III when it has become evident that the conventional measures which have been used have been unsuccessful in inducing the Soviets to restore Allied rights in Berlin, and when the conventional measures still untried offer no reasonable prospect of success.

(SEVERAL PARAGRAPHS EXCISED)

In addition, depending upon the circumstances at the conclusion of Phase II, Phase IV could begin by direct recourse to general war.

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2. Diplomatic. Although it is difficult to predict precisely what diplomatic activity would take place just before and during these operations, it would be important that the Allies make clear to the Soviets their intentions, particularly the terms on which they would discontinue military operations. They should also make clear to the world their reasons for undertaking military operations.

(PARAGRAPH EXCISED)

Planning responsibilities and coordination

Having described the framework within which Berlin planning is taking place, I should like to turn to the machinery.

SLIDE 5

Within the US government, coordination is accomplished by the Berlin Task Force.

The Ambassadorial Group is primarily responsible for the coordination of Berlin contingency planning.

LIVE OAK utilizes the British Commander in Germany for ground access planning, USAFE for air access planning, and the tripartite JACK PINE Command Post (unclear word but probably supervise) related to air access.

The Bonn Quadripartite Committee is primarily responsible for planning related to civilian access, with the assistance of

Berlin and LIVE OAK.

The Berlin Commandants are responsible for contingency planning regarding Berlin itself and for assisting the Bonn Quadripartite Committee and LIVE OAK in the performance of their functions. The Chairman Commandant has the tripartite Allied Staff for planning regarding Berlin.

The governments look to the Permanent Representatives to pursue their government's interest in NAC and the UN.

WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE?

SLIDE 6

Agreement on "four phases"

Phase I. Work on ground access.

Phase II. NATO mobilization, Coordination naval countermeasures.

Phase III and IV. Preparation NATO plans.

Conclusions

The question now arises as to what remains to be done.

1. We are seeking Allied agreement on the four phases. We are at present discussing this quadripartitely, preliminary to discussion in the NAC (SOME WORD EXCISED).

2. With regard to Phase I, we are still working on several key elements of ground access planning. This involves primarily preparation of agreed rules of conduct for Allied convoys and examination of possible Soviet/GDR actions related to civilian access.

3. With regard to Phase II, we are examining two problems: a possible NATO mobilization and the coordination of quadripartite naval measures.

4. With regard to Phases III and IV, we are now ready for NATO examination (SEVERAL WORDS EXCISED). The SACEUR and SACLANC papers are now before the NATO Standing Group, prior to NAC consideration. Field commanders are also preparing the detailed plans.

In a word, although considerable planning has been done, it is by no means complete.
END OF BRIEFING

